

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 15012

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: IT, PINT

SUBJECT: ITALY: THE NATURE AND FUTURE OF THE DC/PCI RELATIONSHIP

REF: STATE 214526

1. WE HAVE READ WITH MUCH INTEREST INR'S TIMELY ANALYSIS ENTITLED "THE NATURE AND FUTURE OF THE DC/PCI ACCOMMODATION," CIRCULATED IN THE REFERENCED TELEGRAM. THERE IS PROBABLY NO MORE BASIC ANALYTICAL PROBLEM OF ITALIAN POLITICS TODAY THAN THAT OF DEFINING THE DC/PCI RELATIONSHIP. BECAUSE BOTH THE DC AND THE PCI HAVE AMPLE REASON TO MASK THE FULL DIMENSIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP (ONE MINIMIZING IT AND THE OTHER EXAGGERATING IT), THE SITUATION ALLOWS THE NUMEROUS PLAUSIBLE SHADINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS. WHILE WE FIND OURSELVES IN GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH THE BASIC POINTS CONTAINED IN INR'S USEFUL INQUIRY, FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT THE THRUST AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE REPORT SEEM UNDULY PESSIMISTIC. WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO MINIMIZE THE EXTREMELY CRITICAL POLITICAL SITUATION OBTAINING IN ITALY, WE WOULD SUGGEST

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THAT PRESENT DC/PCI RELATIONS ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE FLUID AND

CIRCUMSTANTIAL THAN THE TWO-PARTY "CONDOMINIUM" OR "ACCOMMODATION" DESCRIBED IN THE REPORT.

2. ANDREOTTI'S MINORITY "SERVICE" GOVERNMENT IS THE PRODUCT OF THE AMBIGUOUS RESULTS OF THE JUNE NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WHICH PRODUCED GAINS FOR BOTH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE THE COMMUNISTS--FURTHER POLARIZING THE ITALIAN BODY POLITIC THE FACT THAT THESE GAINS, PARTICULARLY FOR THE DC, WERE ACHIEVED AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SMALLER PARTIES FURTHER EMBITTERED INTER-PARTY RELATIONSHIPS AND MADE RECONSTITUTION OF THE TRADITIONAL CENTER-LEFT COALITION FORMULA UNWORKABLE.

3. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DC'S IMMEDIATE TASK AS THE LARGEST ITALIAN PARTY WAS TO DEVISE A TOLERABLE FORMULA TO PROVIDE A TEMPORARY OR TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF DEALING WITH THE COUNTRY'S MOST PRESSING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. THE DC, UNITED IN ITS STRONG ELECTION COMMITMENT NOT TO BRING THE PCI INTO THE GOVERNMENT, COULD NOT ACCEPT THE SOLUTION PROFFERED BY THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS: ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL EMERGENCY COALITION. THE FORMATION OF A DC MINORITY GOVERNMENT DEPENDENT ON THE ABSTENTIONS OF ALL OTHER PARTIES (EXCEPT THE PARTIES OF THE EXTREME RIGHT AND LEFT) WAS THUS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO THE HOLDING OF NEW ELECTIONS-- A COURSE WHICH NO PARTY DESIRED.

4. CONTINUING TO EXCLUDE THE PCI FROM DIRECT PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT OR IN THE GOVERNMENT'S MAJORITY, THE DC CHOSE TO ACCEPT A GREATER COMMUNIST ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONING OF PARLIAMENT AS THE LEAST COSTLY CONCESSION TO OBTAIN NEEDED PCI SUPPORT IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY VIABLE ALTERNATIVE. WHILE ONE SHOULD NOT EXAGGERATE THE FUNCTIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THESE POSITIONS IN THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM, THE PCI PRESIDENCY OF THE CHAMBER AND CHAIRMANSHIP OF SEVEN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES ARE BY NO MEANS INSIGNIFICANT. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THEY PROVIDE THE PCI WITH LONG-SOUGHT LEGITIMACY AS A FULL PARTICIPANT IN THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS. ANDREOTTI ALSO OPENLY CONSULTED PCI LEADERS ON THE GOVERNMENT DRAFT PROGRAM. HOWEVER, HE POINTEDLY STOPPED SHORT OF FORMALLY SOLICITING THE PCI'S ABSENTION (AS HAD BEEN DEMANDED BY THE PCI), REITERATING THAT EACH PARTY'S VOTE WAS FREE AND INDEPENDENT. THE PCI, THEREFORE, CONFIDENTIAL

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HAD TO MAKE ITS DECISION ON ITS OWN (AND TO BE SEEN TO HAVE DONE SO BY ITS RANK-AND-FILE). THE IMPORTANT DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE OPPOSITION AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS PRESERVED.

5. MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF THE FACT THAT AS LONG AS THE OTHER PARTIES (PSI, PRI, OR PSDI) ALSO CONTINUE TO ABSTAIN, THE PCI'S VOTE IN PARLIAMENT IS "DETERMINATIVE." HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH THE PCI CAN THEORETICALLY BRING DOWN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT AT

WILL, IN PRACTICE THE PCI IS NOW SADDLED WITH THE RESTRAINT OF RESPONSIBILITY. BERLINGUER ACKNOWLEDGED AS MUCH EVEN WHILE ANNOUNCING HIS PARTY'S DECISION TO ABSTAIN. TO HAVE DONE OTHERWISE, HE STRESSED, THE PARTY WOULD HAVE BEEN JUDGED GUILTY OF OBSTRUCTIONISM DURING A TIME OF CRISIS. STILL EXCLUDED FROM PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, THE PCI IS NO LONGER EXCLUDED FROM EXERCISING ITS SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY AS WELL AS AUTHORITY IN PARLIAMENT. WHILE THE PCI TOUTS ITS "DETERMINING" VOTE AS A FURTHER STEP TOWARD THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SOME ELEMENTS WITHIN THE PARTY CONSIDER THE DECISION TO PLAY "A DETERMINING ROLE" DANGEROUSLY PREMATURE.

6. THE PCI'S DECISION TO SUPPORT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT BY ABSTAINING HAS CREATED A NEW SET OF POLITICAL DYNAMICS. IF USED PROPERLY BY THE DC, THESE ARE BY NO MEANS TO THE EXCLUSIVE ADVANTAGE OF THE PCI. AS LONG AS THERE IS NO REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE ANDREOTTI MONOCOLORE (A SITUATION WHICH COULD ENDURE FOR SOME TIME), THE PCI MUST EXERCISE A CONSIDERABLE MEASURE OF PARLIAMENTARY RESTRAINT. TO BE SURE, THE DC WILL REQUIRE AT LEAST PCI ABSTENTION TO ENACT ITS LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS. OBVIOUSLY, THE PCI WILL USE THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS TO OBTAIN MODIFICATIONS OF DC PROPOSALS NOT TO ITS LIKING. THE "DEPOLITICIZED" NATURE OF ANDREOTTI'S GOVERNMENT WILL LIKELY ALSO INCREASE THE PRESSURE ON THE PCI TO ACCEPT CO-RESPONSIBILITY FOR CERTAIN UNPOPULAR AUSTERITY PROGRAMS (SUCH AS WAGE RESTRAINT), PARTICULARLY IF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IS PERCEIVED AS PERFORMING IN A BUSINESS-LIKE AND CONSTRUCTIVE MANNER.

7. THE NEW "OPENNESS" OF THE DC/PCI RELATIONSHIP ALSO CUTS BOTH WAYS. DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS, THE TWO PARTIES ENGAGED IN QUIET, BEHIND-THE-SCENES CONSULTATIONS. PROGRAMS FOR PRESENTATION TO PARLIAMENT WERE PRIVATELY WORKED OUT BEFOREHAND WITH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RESULT THAT PARTY RESPONSIBILITY FOR SPECIFIC ACTIONS COULD NEVER BE FULLY IDENTIFIED. HOWEVER, IN REJECTING OLD SOTTOBANCO STYLE OF GOVERNMENT FOR A POLICY OF OPEN CONFRONTO OR COMPETITIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE PCI, ANDREOTTI COULD WELL GAIN GREATER FREEDOM OF ACTION VIS-A-VIS PCI DEMANDS. THE OLD SYSTEM WAS INHERENTLY MORE CONDUCTIVE TO "ACCOMMODATION" THAN OPEN CONSULTATION BETWEEN PARTIES, WHICH BY THEIR PUBLIC NATURE ALLOW FOR FAR LESS DEVIATION IN FORMAL PARTY POSITIONS. ANDREOTTI HAS STRESSED THAT ALL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES WILL TAKE PLACE OPENLY IN PARLIAMENT. THE OTHER PARTIES (AND PARTICULARLY THE PCI) WILL NOW BE FORCED TO TAKE OPEN. PUBLIC POSITIONS ON DC PROPOSALS. IF ANDREOTTI USES THIS SYSTEM WELL, PARTICULARLY FOR THE PASSAGE OF CRITICAL MEASURES, IT COULD PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR A RENEWED CONSENSUS BETWEEN THE DC AND THE LAY PARTIES, , ESPECIALLY THE SOCIALISTS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 15012

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: IT, PINT

SUBJECT: ITALY: THE NATURE AND FUTURE OF THE DC/PCI RELATIONSHIP

REF: STATE 214526

8. THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WILL PROVIDE A MUCH-NEEDED BREATHING SPACE FOR ALL THE PARTIES. FOR BOTH THE DC AND THE PCI, IT WILL BE A CRUCIAL PERIOD WHICH WILL CLARIFY THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE TWO MAJOR ITALIAN PARTIES AS WELL AS THE NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT THAT WILL REPLACE THE NOW-MORIBUND OLD CENTER-LEFT COALITION FORMULA. THERE ARE TOO MANY UNCERTAINTIES AND IMPONDERABLES TO FORETELL WHERE CURRENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS WILL LEAD. ONE THING IS CERTAIN, HOWEVER. THE DC WILL BE UNABLE TO ARREST THE DRIFT TOWARD EVER GREATER ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PCI (AND ULTIMATELY SOME FORM OF THE "HOSTORIC COMPROMISE") UNLESS IT CAN SUCCEED IN CONSTRUCTING A NEW FORM OF POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH THE SOCIALISTS AND OTHER LAY PARTIES, AS WELL AS STRENGTHENING AND MODERNIZING ITS OWN BASE. WHAT FORM THIS NEW

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COALITION MIGHT TAKE IS FAR FROM CLEAR. HOWEVER, IF THE PSI IS TO BE WEANED BACK INTO THE DC CAMP, IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE TO BE ON THE BASIS OF A NEW ARRANGEMENT IN WHICH THE PSI PERCEIVES ITSELF (AND IS PERCEIVED BY OTHERS) AS HAVING A SIGNIFICANT AND NOT SUBSERVANT ROLE. IF THE DC AND THE PSI CAN REACH AGREEMENT ON A NEW TYPE OF POLITICAL PARTNERSHIP (WHICH SUCCEEDS IN PRESERVING THE INTEGRITY OF THE PSI), THEN THE OTHER LAY PARTIES CAN BE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW SUIT RATHER THAN RISK THE POLITICAL EXTINCTION THAT PROLONGED ISOLATION WOULD CAUSE.

9. WHETHER THIS CRUCIAL "POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION" (AS DC DEP. SECRETARY GALLONI DESCRIBES IT) CAN BE ACHIEVED WILL DEPEND ON A VARIETY OF FACTORS, BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY ON THE ATTITUDES OF THE SOCIALISTS THEMSELVES. THE SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY THE SUSPICIONS AND BITTERNESS THAT EXIST AMONG AND BETWEEN THE LAY PARTIES AND THE DC. BADLY BATTERED IN THE JUNE ELECTIONS, THE SOCIALISTS HAVE ALSO JUST UNDERGONE A TRAUMATIC LEADERSHIP CHANGE. WHILE THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT CRAXI, THE PSI'S NEW SECRETARY AND A FIRM ANTI-COMMUNIST, IS BOTH DISPOSED AND CAPABLE OF LEADING THE PSI OUT OF ITS POLITICAL WILDERNESS, THE INFLUENCE OF THE PSI OLD GUARD IS STILL STRONG AND THE UNCOMPROMISING POLICY LINE SET DOWN AT THE LAST PARTY CONGRESS REMAINS. STILL, ELEMENTS IN BOTH THE PSI AND THE DC ARE MAKING THE RIGHT NOISES ABOUT "CREATING CONDITIONS FOR THE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS" BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES. SINCE THE PCI IS ESSENTIALLY UNINTERESTED IN THE PCI/PSI POPULAR FRONT FORMULA FAVORED BY THE PSI (THE PCI WILL CONTINUE TO INSIST ON COMING INTO GOVERNMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DC), A REBUFFED PSI COULD WELL IN TIME PERCEIVE ITS PRESENT POLICY LINE AS ISOLATING AND FUTILE, LEADING ONLY TO THE REPLACEMENT OF DC DIRECTION WITH PCI HEGEMONY. IT WILL REMAIN TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE CONDITIONS FOR A NEW CENTER-LEFT ALLIANCE WITH THE DC CAN BE MADE ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH TO BRING ALONG THE ENTIRE PSI.

10. FOR ITS PART, THE PCI WILL SEEK IN THE COMING MONTHS TO EXPAND ITS INFLUENCE AND TO PROMOTE ITS IMAGE OF RESPECTABILITY AS A RECOGNIZED PARTICIPANT IN THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS. IT WILL ALSO DO ITS BEST TO BLOCK CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW CENTER-LEFT ALLIANCE WOULD LEAVE THE PARTY OUT IN THE COLD. IF THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE DC CAN INFLUENCE THE PSI'S FUTURE COURSE IS LIMITED, THE PCI'S LEVERAGE ON THE SOCIALISTS IS ALSO IMPERFECT.

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IT IS MORE AVERSION TO THE DC THAN PREFERENCE FOR THE PCI WHICH

MOTIVATED THE PSI TO REJECT FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN AN OLD-STYLE DC-DOMINATING COALITION. MOREOVER, THE PCI HAS LITTLE TO OFFER THE SOCIALISTS, WHO RISK FURTHER POLITICAL EROSION THE LONGER THEY REMAIN OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MORE THE DC AND PCI ARE SEEN TO BE THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS THAT COUNT.

11. ON CURRENT ECONOMIC POLICIES, DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DC AND THE PCI ARE NOT AS GREAT AS THEY MIGHT SEEM. IN FACT, THERE IS A BROAD CONSENSUS SHARED BY ALL PARTIES ON THE NATURE OF THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FACING ITALY AND ON THE CONSEQUENT NEED FOR SOME FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES. WHILE THE PCI MIGHT BE MORE PREDISPOSED TO EFFECT CHANGE, THE DC IS HARDLY COMMITTED TO THE STATUS QUO. AT THE MOMENT THE DC'S ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON SHORT-TERM STABILIZATION MEASURES, AN OBVIOUS FIRST STEP. HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT IMPLY UNWILLINGNESS TO FACT BROADER, LONGER-TERM ISSUES. IF RECENT EXPERIENCE CAN BE A GUIDE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT, BEFORE ITS DEMISE, THE MORO-LA MALFA GOVERNMENT PROPOSED AN INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM (PROVIDING FOR CAPITAL EXPANSION). ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE AREAS WHERE THE DC WILL BE HESITANT TO EFFECT CHANGES, SUCH AS THE PUBLIC INDUSTRIAL SECTOR WHERE IT HAS IMPORTANT POLITICAL POWER (WHICH THE PCI WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE TO LIMIT OR ELIMINATE).

12. FINALLY, ONE SHOULD NOT MINIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DC'S FIRM REJECTION OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE AS A CORNERSTONE OF THE PARTY'S POLICY AT THE MARCH NATIONAL CONGRESS, A POSITION THAT SUBSEQUENTLY FORMED THE BASIS FOR THE DC'S STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. EVEN IF THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY SOME IN THE PARTY WHO BELIEVE THAT THE DC HAS NO ALTERNATIVE OTHER THAN GREATER ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PCI, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE NO DC POLITICIAN CAN EXPOUND SUCH A THESIS OPENLY. THERE ARE MOREOVER VERY SIZEABLE CONSTRAINTS AND PRESSURES AGAINST ACCEPTANCE OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE: THE WEIGHT OF US AND EUROPEAN (PARTICULARLY WEST GERMAN) OPINION; THE UNCOMPROMISING POSITION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH; AND THE STRENGTH OF NEW GRASS-ROOTS PRESSURE GROUPS SUCH AS MILLE AND COMUNIONE E LIBERAZIONE. EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE PUBLIC AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP WOULD HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A RADICAL POLICY SHIFT. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE

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PARTY COULD DO SO WITHOUT EXPERIENCING A SIZEABLE DISERTION FROM ITS RANKS, A FACTOR THAT IS AS WORRISOME TO THE PCI AS TO THE DC.

13. IN CONCLUSION, WE SEE THE DC AND THE PCI AT SOMETING OF A STALEMATE--NEITHER PARTY CAN DICTATE ITS WILL, NEITHER PARTY CAN BE SATISFIED WITH ITS CURRENT SITUATION. IF THE PCI ENJOYS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EDGE DUE IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO THE PREVAILING

CURRENT OF DDEP AND SELF-FULFILLING PESSIMISM, A NEW SITUATION CURRENTLY OBTAINS THAT CAN BE EXPLOITED EQUALLY BY BOTH PARTIES. IN DECIDING TO SUPPORT (THROUGH ITS ABSTENSION) THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, THE PCI FINDS ITSELF CONSTRAINED FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH THE ONUS OF CO-RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNMENT WHILE STILL EXCLUDED FROM GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE BOTH ADVANTAGES AND RISKS IN THIS FOR THE PCI, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE POTENTIAL FOR INTERNAL DISSATISFACTION (EGGED ON BY THE RADICAL LEFT) IF THE PCI CANNOT DEMONSTRATE REAL PROGRESS TOWARD ITS GOAL OF ULLL PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE SIMILARLY ADVANTAGES AND RISKS IN THE CURRENT SITUATION FOR THE DC--IF IT DOES NOT SUCCEED IN CONSTRUCTING A NEW FORM OF PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PSI, THE FRIFT TOWARD GREATER ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PCI WILL BE DIFFUCULT TO ARREST--A PROCESS THAT COULD WELL ULTIMATELY SPLIT THE PARTY. THE DC-PCI RELATIONSHIP IS STILL MORE CIRCUMSTANTIAL THAN STRUCTURED. ITS FUTURE NATURE WILL DEPEND PRIMARILY ON THE COURSE SELECTED BY THE SOCIALISTS. WHILE THERE ARE FEW OBSERVERS OF THE ITALIAN SCENE WHO REGARD THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH OPTIMISM, AT THIS POINT THE BALL IS STILL IN PLAY. BEAUDRY

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